

**Carnegie  
Mellon  
University**

# Host Family Program for International Students

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**WELCOME SPRING!**  
April - May 2020



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Office of International Education (OIE)

# The Host Family Program for International Students

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**This program is part of a university-wide strategic goal to enhance the CMU student experience.**

**It facilitates greater engagement between students and CMU faculty, staff, alumni, and local families.**



Sponsored by the Office of International Education (OIE), the program started in 2016.

Hosts and students are matched, and then get together once a month or so, taking trips to museums, sporting events, and sharing meals at home. They often stay in touch after the student has graduated.



# The Spring 2020 semester moved online after Spring Break, due to the Coronavirus Pandemic

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How can the Host Family experience continue in this new era of Social Distancing?

Hosts and their students now stay in touch via email, Zoom meetings, and phone.

The O.I.E. office also sponsored a prize basket raffle. Students entered the raffle by email and told us how they are doing as they shelter in place. They sent in pictures of themselves from their apartments.



As of May and June 2020, the delivery date of prizes to the winners is TBA!

Students were invited to send in pictures of themselves, and answer these questions

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How are your classes, and are you enjoying the virtual learning experience?

What are your hobbies and interests? Have you developed any new ones?

If you're watching television, what shows or movies have you liked?

What are you looking forward to in the future?



## The Virtual Learning Experience

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“Online classes surely can’t replace the classroom. But they help in other ways. Instead of watching “Money Heist,” I’m binge-watching Management Science lectures, and having Data Mining watch parties. We’re finding innovative ways to figure things out and to have fun.”

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“There is no need to worry about what to wear every day, which is both a good thing and a sad thing.”

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“The virtual learning makes it harder for me to concentrate. However, we can get the recording of the classes and that helps. I miss talking to professors and classmates face-to-face. I am looking forward to getting back to school and having intimate communications with friends.”

# The Virtual Learning Experience

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“Online classes just feel amazing -- specifically for math-heavy courses -- since these are recorded and if you do not understand something in one shot, you can watch the video again and again. To me, that makes a difference.”

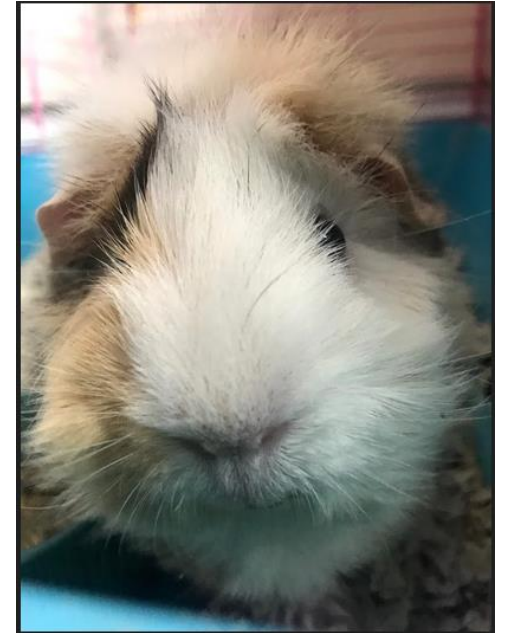
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“The midterm exam via Zoom was very interesting. There was an unexpected situation -- everybody could hear a student’s mom talking. And making a lot of noise by using a vacuum cleaner. But it went well in the end.”

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“One thing I really like about the virtual classes is the chance to be able to wake up just before the class. I do not have to go through the morning rush.”

Ziming (left), her roommate, and their pet guinea pig



## Ziming's art work

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Rahul (center) with his roommates



**What are you looking forward to in the future?**

“Well, I can't wait for this to be over and get into the world!”



## Hobbies

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“Because of my sky-rocketing food consumption, my living room is now a gym and I work out every day.”

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“Cooking! I did not have time to do this before, but now I have more free time. It is a good way to relax, since I don't have to stare at a screen when I do this.”

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“Most of my hobbies have gotten replaced with Python and R. What's left is cooking and taking my bike out for a ride. The trail from Hot Metal Bridge to Point State Park is amazing.”

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**“I'm energized when I'm reading a good book. Also, I play guitar.”**

# Recommended Movies and TV Shows



The Truman Show

Joker ("I didn't quite understand it but it makes me think of the situation we are in now")

Her

2001: A Space Odyssey

Kingdom (Korean zombies)

The Platform

Indian Bollywood movies

Kung Fu Hustle

Uncut Gems

Goodfellas

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The Office

Breaking Bad

Friends

Money Heist

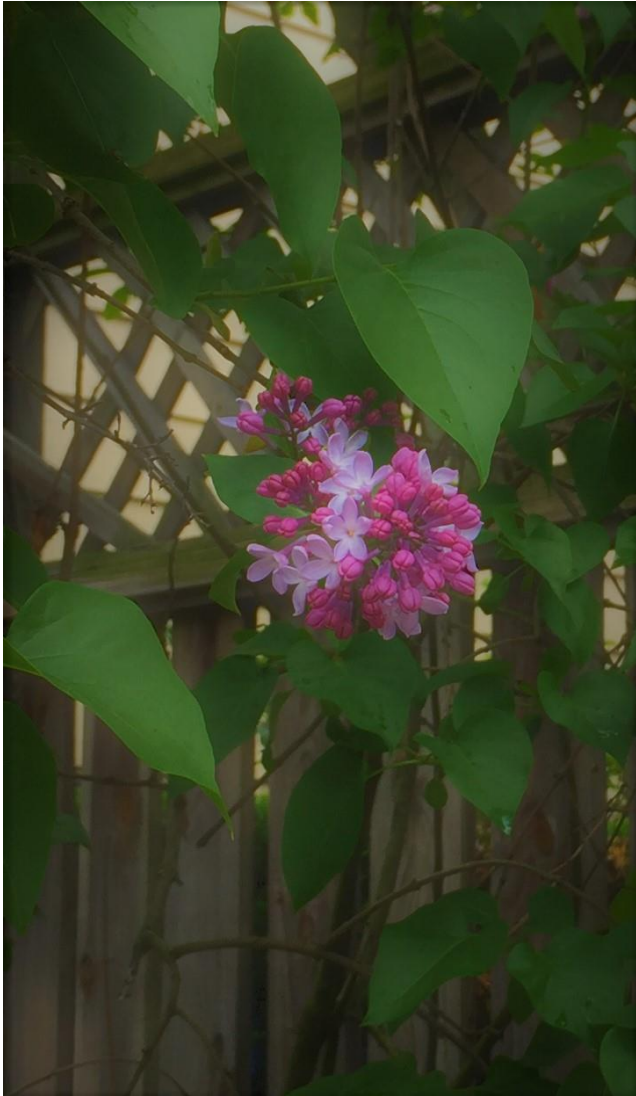
Peaky Blinders

The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel

Tales from the Loop

Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak

Japanese Anime



## A few comments

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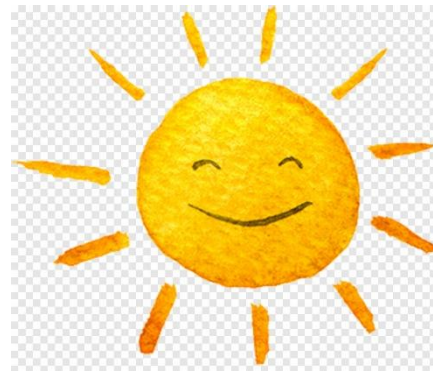
“I may not be able to share my photos with you now since the house is messy. I will send you photos when the house is neat.”

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“CMU has been so supportive – it’s heartwarming that our professors are reaching out to ensure that we are doing well, since so many of us are under a lot of stress.”

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“It is so great to share my recent life with you – because talking to others is a lot harder these days.”



(One student explains his interest in winning a prize basket with a stuffed animal): “I guess the reason I like soft toys so much is because I always wanted them when I was a child.”

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“I’m now running 4-5 times a week – much more than I’ve ever done. I have been exploring trails and nature at Frick Park and Schenley Park. It helps me stay fit, energized and happy! I have also rediscovered my love for music, and started singing again. My roommates and I jam once in a while, which is great!”

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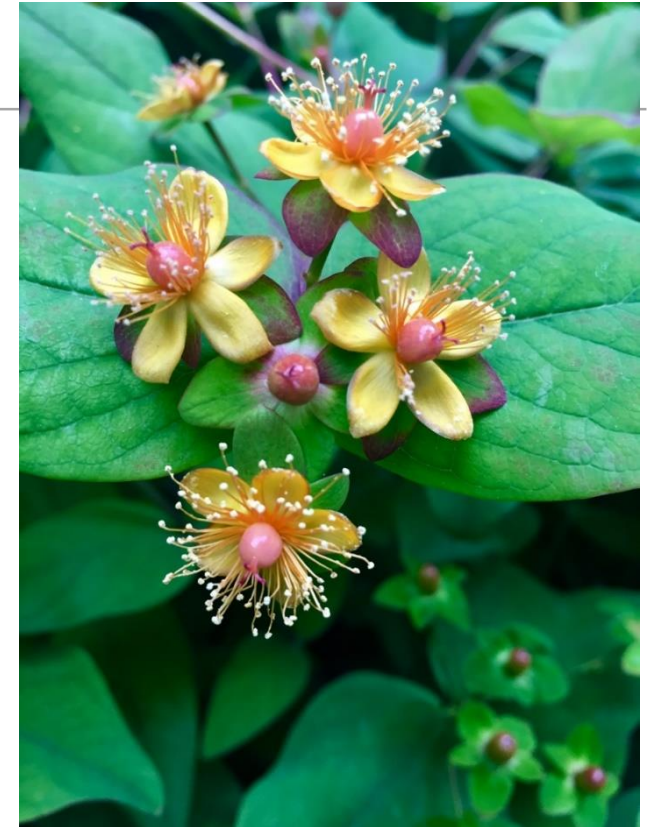
“One thing I look forward to is going out for a nice long walk under the warm sun. My room doesn't get much sunlight, even when it's sunny outside, so I look forward to the simple pleasures.”



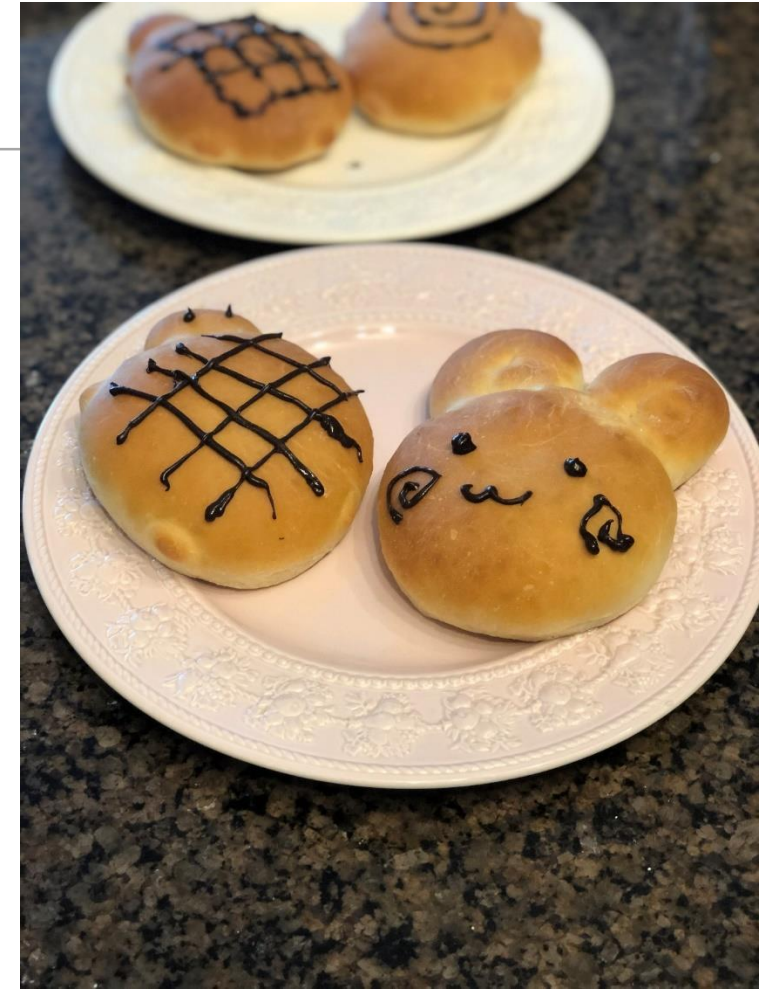
Lihan now has more time to cook, and shares photos of her latest creations



# Aditi at her window

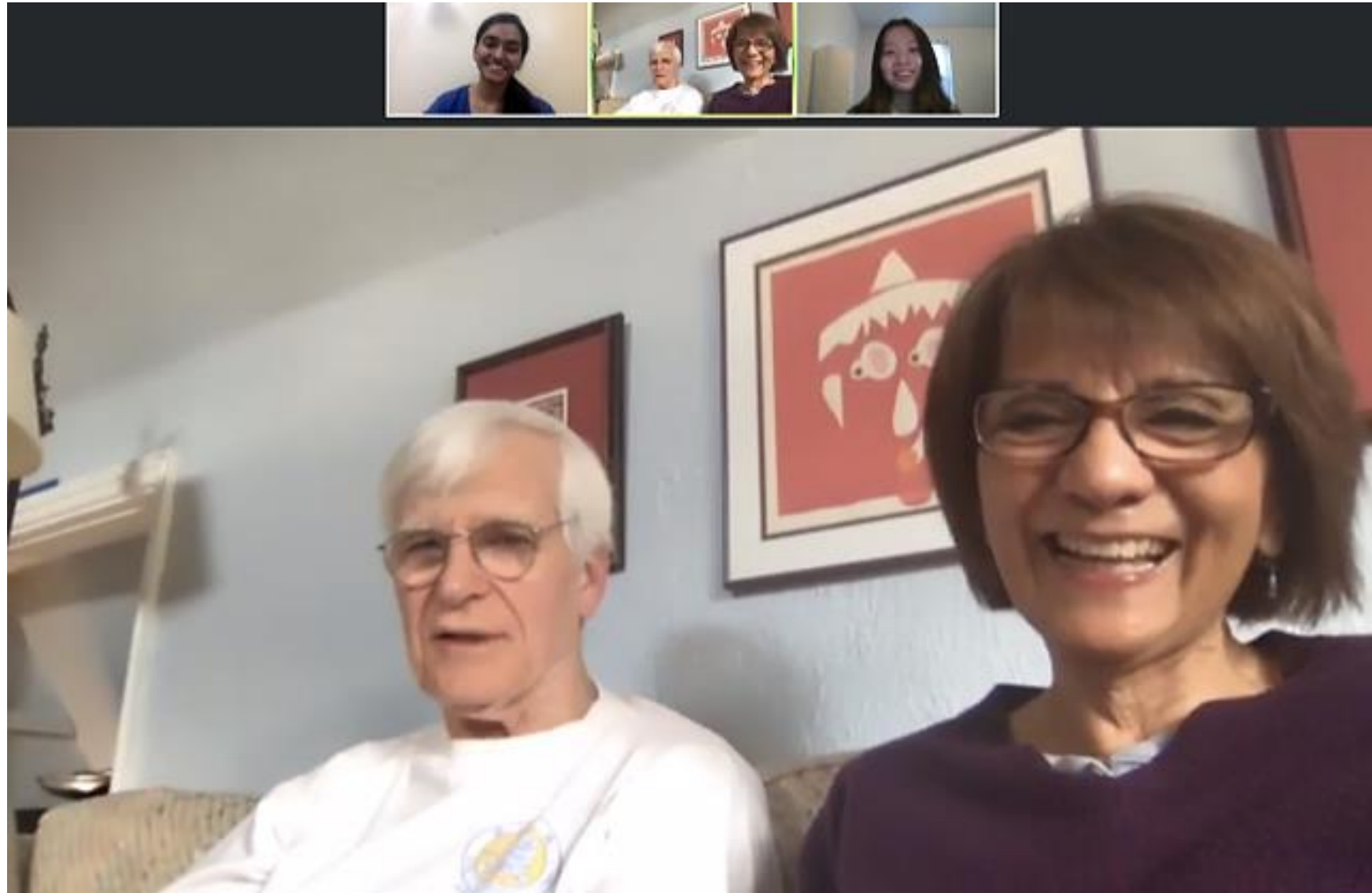


Akinori and his son do some baking, painting the turtle and bunny designs with a chocolate pen





Hosts Ken and Lyn Krynski keep in touch with their students



Zhaomin spends more time cooking



Gautam enjoys watching comedies like "The Simpsons" and "The Good Place"



Rahul and his housemates have a picnic, and create some watercolor paintings

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## Harshal reflects on end-of-semester activities

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“Right now, it is the busiest time of the semester, everything is coming together - the group project, final exam, individual projects, internship search, etc.

I am still figuring ways to adjust to the ‘new normal’ in terms of optimal diet and exercise.”



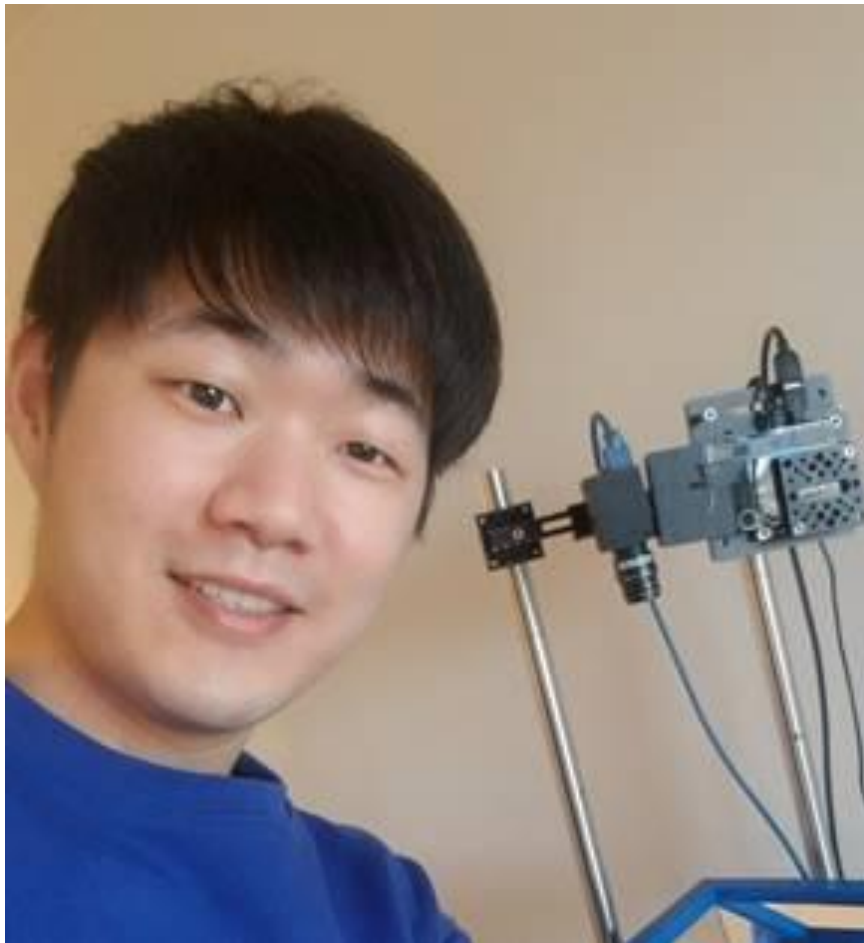
## Mandeep (left), his roommates, and their robot in their apartment



“My life is starting to feel a little more balanced during lockdown, as I am able to give more time to cooking food and getting enough sleep.

Also, since I’ve been sitting inside my home for so many weeks now, it’s easy to be motivated to go to the park to take a walk.”

## Byeongjoo sets up his research lab in his apartment



“Before the campus was shut down, I brought my research setup to my home. But the problem was that my research is in optics, so my room needs to be dark, which is difficult because of the big window in my room.

So, I started to work at night and changed my day and night, but living in a dark room was not comfortable.

Now, I am trying to find a balance between my other work and the dark room experiment – and I’ll take a walk and exercise outside while practicing social distancing when the weather is good 😊.”

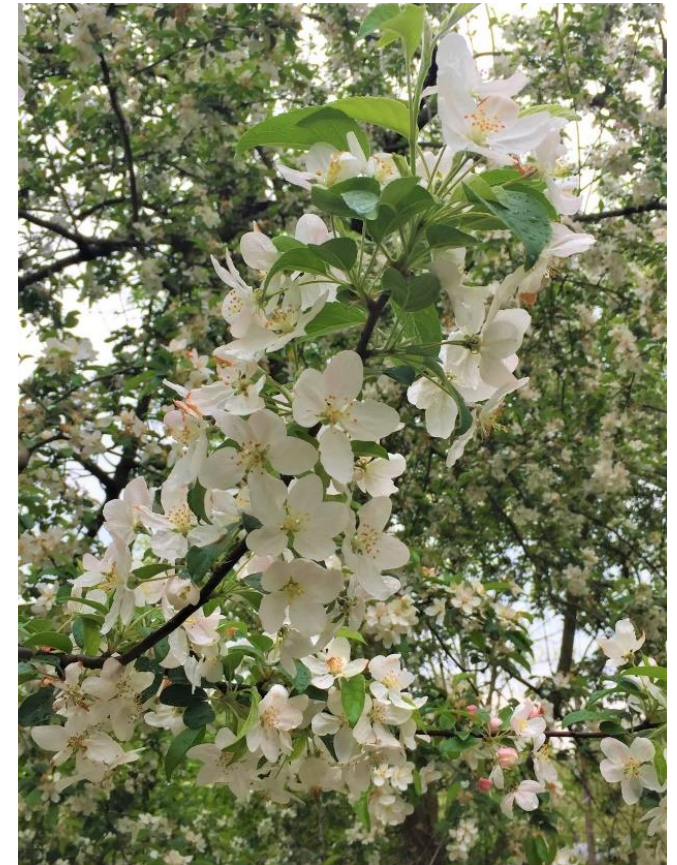


## Amulya at home

*Hobbies and interests?*

“I love sketching and making digital artworks.

Recently I have started making origami art installations in my free time.”



# Jiayi gets ready to go grocery shopping!



Ball cap, sunglasses, and a black mask.  
Sounds about right!



## Comments

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“I look forward to meeting my family and resuming life with a positive mindset, being grateful, and being kinder to the environment.”

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“I need to start practicing Social Distancing from my refrigerator!”

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“The CMU pantry has really helped with groceries, and we make sure to wear masks and gloves when we step out to Giant Eagle once a month.”

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“I cut my own hair now!”

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“I have been having some pretty weird sleeping habits. I’ll sleep for four hours, and then I’m awake all night. I realize that sometimes we never believe that something can happen – until it happens to us.”



Host Family students who graduated and are on OPT (Optional Practical Training) in the U.S., or are working back home, discussed their experiences during the pandemic

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**They responded to these questions:**

How is your job, and how has it changed since the pandemic? If you're working from home, are you enjoying it?

What are your hobbies and interests? Have you developed any new ones?

What are you looking forward to in the future?



Josue and his wife Angelica on campus in 2018 (left photo).

Josue is now working in New Jersey, and they're enjoying life with their beautiful son Octavio



“The experience of being parents has been wonderful for us. It is more work, but the tiredness is automatically out of the body when Octavio smiles.”

## Josue reflects

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“New Jersey is one of the hotspots in terms of COVID. However we are living in Cherry Hill, which is in south Jersey and this place is a bit ‘calm’; the number of cases in the county are around 2,000, including 74 deaths. Those are horrible numbers though. This pandemic is something new for everyone and the only way to survive is keep the social distance.

I am working from home for about one month. I used to work from home 1-2 days a week, so I had an idea of what this would be like. I have a good relationship with my co-workers, so I really miss talking to them face-to-face.

In these pandemic days, we normally see Netflix, YouTube and local TV shows. We also watch Telemundo and Univision, so we’re aware of what’s happening in the Spanish-speaking community. Many of the job layoffs are affecting Spanish people -- as most of them work in construction, restaurants and other support services -- so we are being impacted dramatically by the pandemic.”

Ravneet works in State College PA, and enjoys a sunny day with his dog Dennis

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## Kanishk works from home

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“I’m enjoying working and learning new stuff online.

While at CMU, I developed an interest in cycling and going to the gym. So right now, I practice calisthenics and other exercises at home.”



## Favorite Activities

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“I’m trying to paint these days, and am picking up the habit of reading again -- which I had wanted to do for so long but was too busy. I have four friends living in my building so I spend weekends with them playing board games.”

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“We’re keeping our five- and seven-year-old children busy by cooking and baking! And also, we play a lot of cards – UNO in particular.”

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“Food is very close to my heart. I spend more time cooking which basically makes me happy. My mom's surprised that I can cook this well. Also, I started listening to new podcasts and reading new genres of books of late. I only wish I did this much before.”



## Gurinder in San Jose



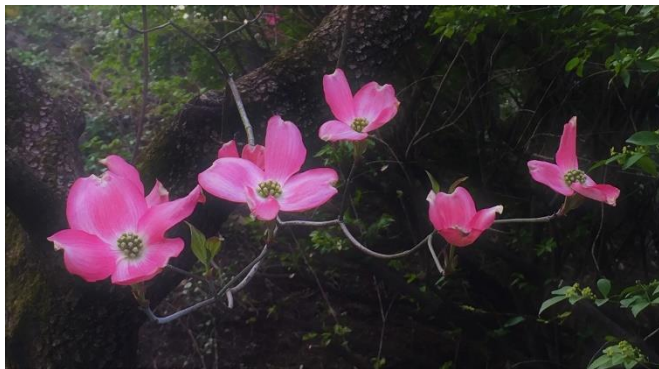
"I have made new friends. There are small birds which come to take the rice seed. It's cute, I have bird feeders.

Also, I bought a ukulele, a Raspberry Pi, a kite and a power glider. I will be learning all of this soon.

I am learning to make and edit YouTube videos."





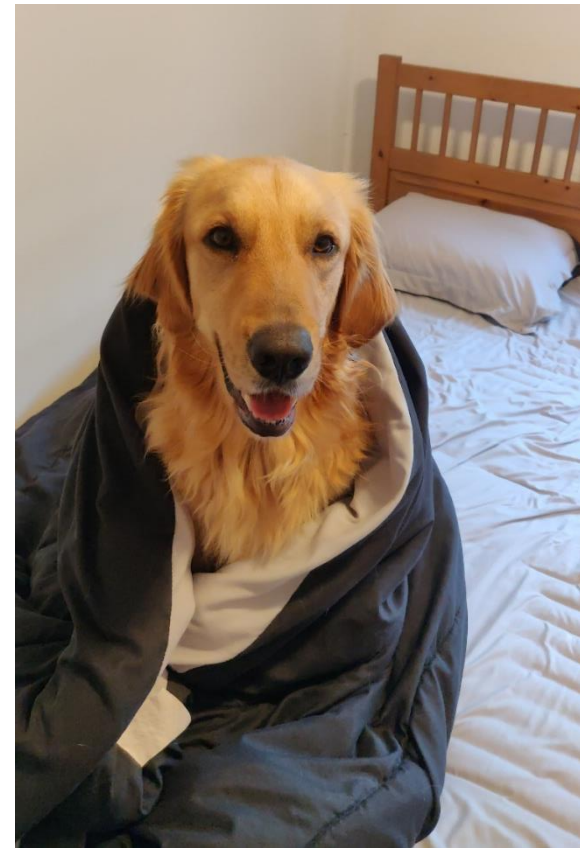


Roommates Shivang and Danendra in their Boston apartment



Abhishek is now working in Santa Clara. Here he is with his roommate's dog Buddy.

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## Abhishek is loving his job

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I am having so much fun in developing interesting stuff.

I'm working from home these days and to be frank, I am kind of loving it!!

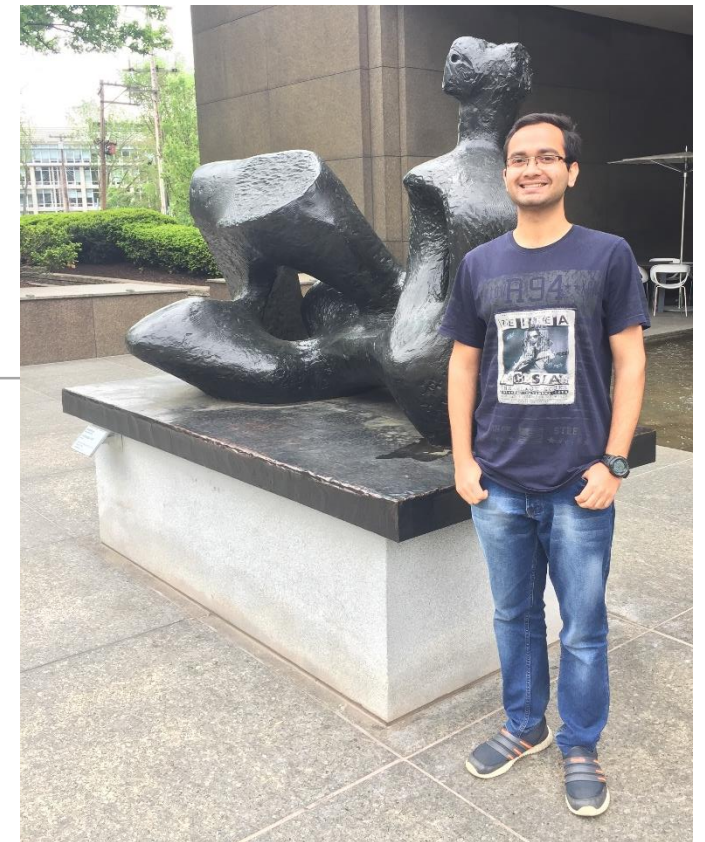
I'm using my extra time learning new things – like playing the ukulele! :)

Every day, my parents send new recipes and I have so much fun cooking.

I am also trying my hand at gardening. Planted 4 different species of tomatoes and green chilies. The plants have all germinated now.

I am optimistic about the future. This experience has taught me a lot of things. I could devote more time towards self-development and could understand more about my goals and likings.

I think we all will survive this crisis and will come out with more positivity!!



## Lakshmi, Assistant Professor at IIT-Delhi, working from home

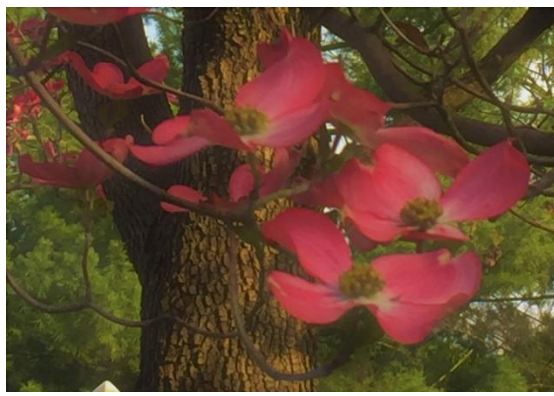
*Lakshmi was a post-doc at CMU in 2017-18. He is teaching at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) – Delhi.*

“Work has been going on, and I’ve been really busy, fortunately. I’m sticking to a routine and that’s helping me stay productive.

When I have free time, I like to cook and read (technical stuff, though!).

I’m sure that when things restart, the world will be a different place. I’m looking forward to being free again! I want to get back to doing research and setting up my lab. Hope all goes well.”





## Yamuna starts a new job in San Jose

“What’s happening around us was least expected. We need to quickly adapt and take care of ourselves.

I spent some time home in India, and returned to the U.S. at the end of February to start a new job in San Jose.

Within two weeks, because of the pandemic, I started working from home. So, everything in my life is relatively new at this point - new job, city, apartment, roommate, work culture. I am slowly getting into a routine this month.

I hope things stabilize quickly and things get back to normal for all of us.”



Ansh is working in Pittsburgh and enjoying the view from his apartment



“I have a lot of hobbies so I have never been bored at home. I play video games, watch movies and TV shows, chat with family and friends and play games remotely with them, exercise, make jigsaw puzzles, cook, learn Mandarin.”

Nanki is happily working in Georgia



“Work is going well. I'm trying to adjust to working from home and staying as efficient as possible. Though working from home brings the comfort of not having to get up early, I have realized that the line between work and home has become blurry.

But it's good to be able to work at a time when a lot of people are out of jobs, and I'm grateful for that.

I hope and pray for everyone in CMU, India, U.S. and for that matter everywhere in the world to have patience in this testing time. I'm sure all of us will come out of this situation more sensitive towards nature and each other.”